

SETTING UP A WORKSHOP IN PRISON

- A. Requests for workshops may come either from an inmate or group of inmates, or from someone in the prison administration. Whichever is the source of the request, it is strict AVP policy to give workshops **only** to inmates who volunteer for it.

If the request comes from one or more inmates, respond by asking whether there is a group of 12 to 20 inmates in the prison interested in attending the workshop. Explain that since the workshops are not effective when offered to large groups, AVP has set 20 as the maximum number of participants for any workshop, with up to four alternates allowed on an alternative list in case some of the original 20 withdraw. Send literature (see next paragraph) to assist them in explaining to other inmates what the program is all about. Explain that it is our policy to give the workshop to volunteers only, and that we expect that by volunteering, people are making a commitment to attend the entire workshop. Ask if the inmate(s) requesting the workshop are in a position to make the necessary arrangements with the institution; if not, ask who on the prison staff we should contact to initiate arrangements from outside. Keep the inmate(s) informed at all times of the status of negotiations.

Since AVP has been working in the prisons for a number of years now, and has a track record, it is often not necessary to explain to prison staff requesting workshops who we are and what we do. When it becomes necessary, the explanation is contained in the AVP brochure and in the first four pages of Section A of this manual, both of which may be sent to the inquirer. It should be stressed to prison authorities that our policy forbids giving the workshop to anyone who does not volunteer to take it. Explain that coercing people to take the workshop violates its spirit and destroys its credibility, and that on the few occasions when we have given it to people who were required to take it (on one such occasion, those required were prison staff, not inmates), it has not been successful. Say, however, that we will be happy to cooperate in any way we can to explain the program to prison administrators or to potential volunteers. If this means setting up a preliminary meeting with staff or inmates or both, we will be happy to send representatives to such a meeting.

B. Additional information for inquirers:

1. We offer workshops on three levels: Basic, Advanced, and Training for Facilitators. The last two are limited to volunteers who have taken the preceding workshop(s).
2. Basic and Advance Workshops usually consist of 8 sessions, averaging 2½ to 3 hours each, preferably on three consecutive days or over a weekend. Training for Facilitators can usually be given in 8 sessions, depending on the experience of the group to be trained.
3. Teams usually number two to five people. If more than three, the extra members are usually apprentices. As a general rule, we discourage outside observers because we find that their presence is a source of discomfort and distrust to the participants, but we do encourage outsiders to enroll in prison workshops as *participants*, on the same level as inmate participants, if they are unable to attend Basic Workshops given in the community. Once a program is established in a prison and inmates have completed all 3 levels, teams should consist of both outside facilitators and inmate facilitators.
4. Certificates of completion are issued to all who complete the course. To those who have missed more than two sessions, letters of attendance only are issued.